



Reroutes and Repairs to Flood Damaged Trails Rocky Mountain National Park

Newsletter
October 2014

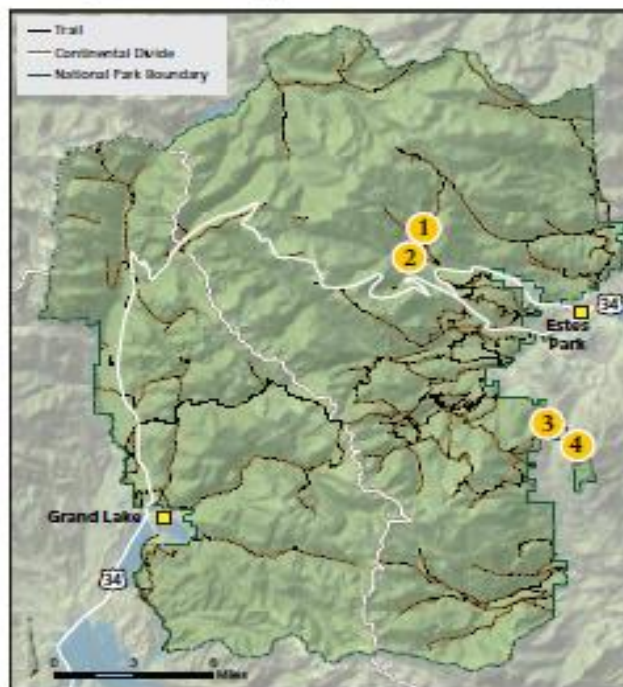
Background

The National Park Service (NPS) is considering reroutes and repairs to several trails in Rocky Mountain National Park (park) that were damaged or destroyed during the September 2013 flood. Several trails require extensive repairs or rerouting to avoid badly damaged or missing trail segments. In accordance

with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and other laws, regulations, and policies, the NPS is initiating work on an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project to the natural, cultural, and human environment.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to identify potential travel routes while protecting natural and cultural resources and preserving wilderness character. Damaged trails proposed for reroutes or repairs include Lawn Lake, Ypsilon Lake, Alluvial Fan, Twin Sisters, and Aspen Brook. All of these trails currently remain open to the public, but portions of the trails and bridges have been washed out by flooding and landslides or are badly damaged. Social trails have developed in some locations around the damaged or missing trail segments, which can lead to soil erosion and vegetation damage over time.

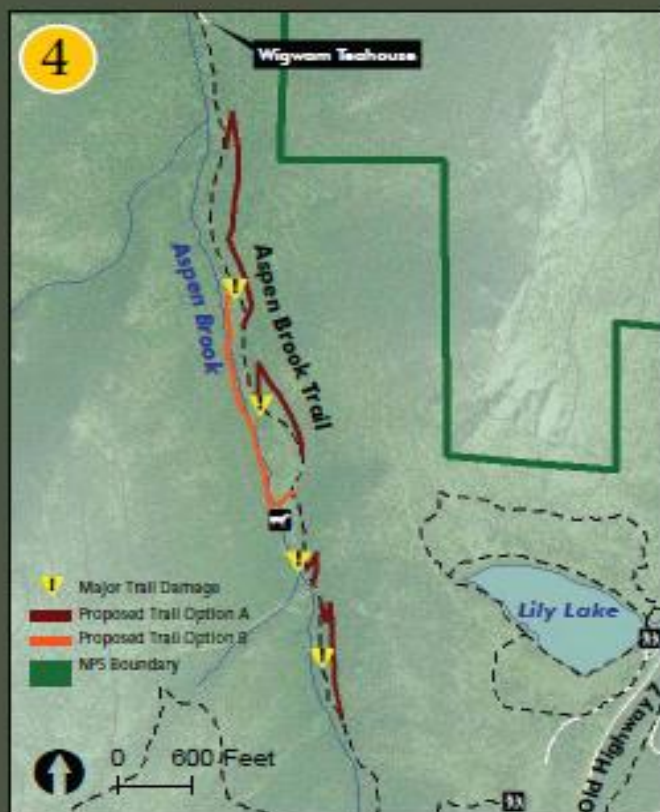
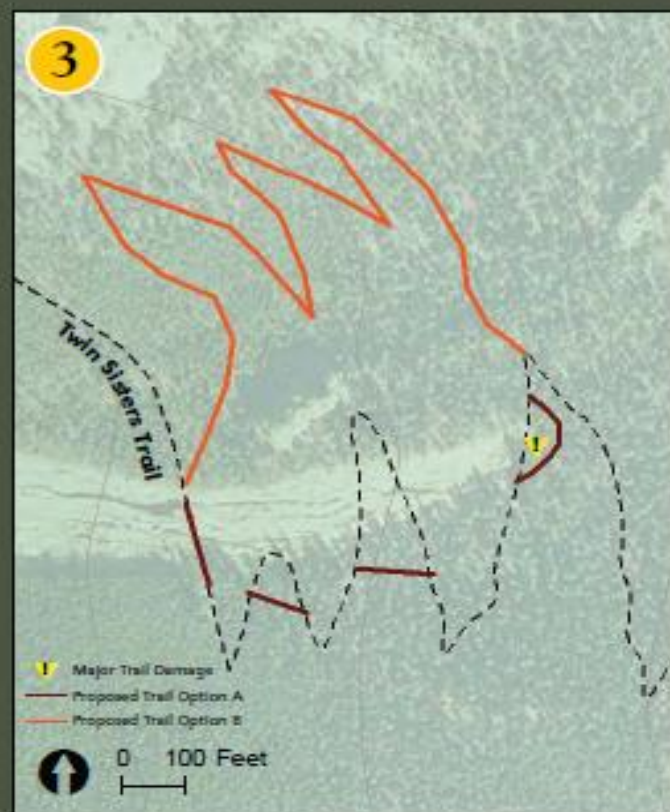
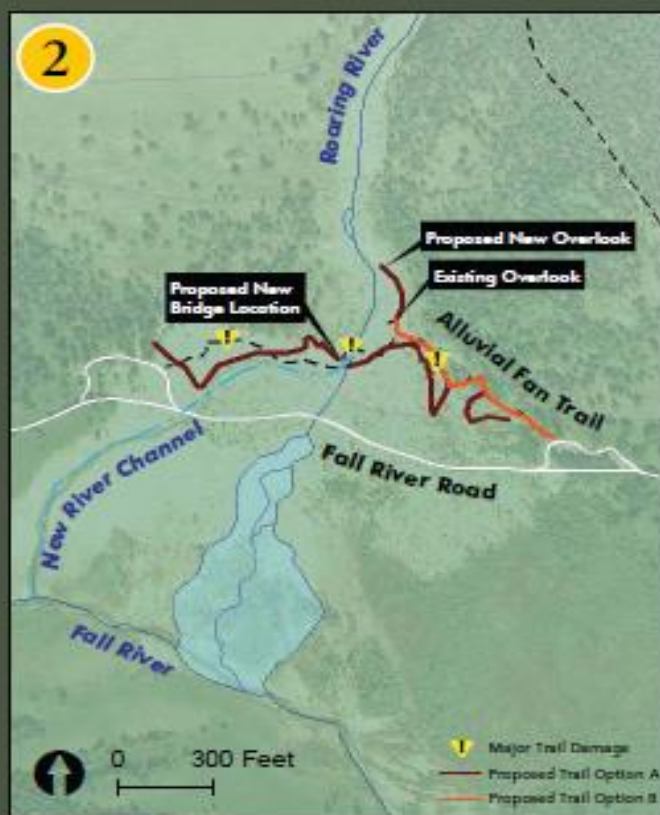
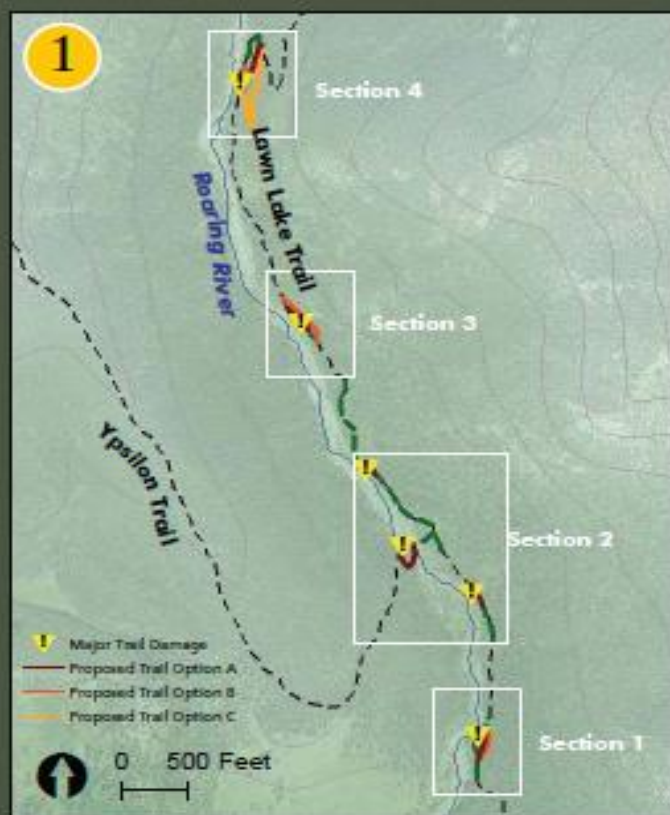


Erosion on Aspen Brook Trail



Landslide on Twin Sisters Trail

Trail Damage and Potential Reroutes and Repairs



Options for Treatment of Damaged Trails

The park is considering several options for each trail, including constructing short detours around damaged or missing trail segments or constructing longer, more sustainable trails that require less maintenance over the long term. Also under consideration in some locations is the improvement of social trails that developed following the flood. Restoration of trails in their previous location is not always feasible where the trail has been undermined or badly damaged or where unstable material within a landslide path is present. Complete trail closure is also an option that may be considered for some trails. Trail segments abandoned due to reroutes or closure would be restored to natural conditions through active replanting or natural revegetation.

1 Lawn Lake Trail and Ypsilon Lake Trail

The Lawn Lake Trail involves a steep 6.2-mile one-way hike to Lawn Lake. Lawn Lake was the site of a dam failure in 1982. Following dam failure, the dam was removed and the trail was rebuilt. Significant erosion of the banks of the Roaring River during the 2013 flood took out several sections of trail. The park is considering several options for trail reroutes at four locations along damaged sections of the Lawn Lake Trail.

The Ypsilon Lake Trail starts 1.4 miles up the Lawn Lake Trail. At the trail junction, the Ypsilon Lake Trail branches to the west, crossing the Roaring River. The portion of the trail and bridge that crosses the Roaring River washed out during the flood. Rerouting a portion of the Ypsilon Lake Trail near the Lawn Lake Trail intersection and replacing the bridge across the Roaring River at a new location is being considered.

2 Alluvial Fan Trail

This 0.3-mile accessible trail runs between two parking lots located on the east and west sides of the alluvial fan created by the Lawn Lake flood. Recent flood flows along the Roaring River destroyed most of the Alluvial Fan Trail. Much of the asphalt trail was cracked, heaved, and/or washed away. The bridge remains but is buried under rock and sediment. Rerouting and reconstructing the east and west sides of the Alluvial Fan Trail and constructing a new footbridge at a new location is being considered. The park is also considering constructing at least one segment of the trail to accessibility standards.

3 Twin Sisters Trail

This 3.5-mile one-way trail begins up a west-facing slope on long, steep switchbacks with views along the Continental Divide. A massive landslide removed five switchbacks on the lower portion of the trail. Several alternative reroutes north of the landslide are under consideration, as well as possible use of social trails that have developed following the landslide.

4 Aspen Brook Trail

This 1.8-mile one-way trail is accessed from Lily Lake off the Storm Pass Trail. The trail descends along Aspen Brook and ends at the park boundary, which is also the site of the historic Wigwam Tearoom. Further travel across private property to the north is prohibited. This trail experienced significant erosion, trenching, and sloughing during the flood. Options to reestablish this trail include reroutes upslope from the eroded trail or repairs to the existing trail. Because of the highly erodible soils along the Aspen Brook Trail and the difficulty in maintaining this trail, closure and restoration of this trail may be considered.

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Next Steps

To evaluate the options for treatment of damaged trails, the NPS will be preparing an EA. The EA will analyze a range of alternatives to meet project objectives and evaluate potential impacts on park resources such as vegetation, wildlife, wilderness character, soils, visitor use, cultural resources, and other important park resources. One of the first steps in the NEPA process is to conduct public scoping to gather input from the public, interest groups, and agencies about the proposed project, alternative actions, and resource concerns. As described below, there will be several opportunities for public input.

Public Scoping Meeting

The park encourages public participation throughout the planning process. The park will be hosting a public scoping meeting to inform the public about the proposed project. This will be an opportunity to express your ideas, concerns, and recommendations about alternative actions and have questions answered. The public scoping meeting will be held in:

Estes Park Colorado
Tuesday, November 18, 2014 from 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Estes Valley Library – Hondius Room
225 East Elkhorn Avenue
Estes Park Colorado 80517

Send Us Your Comments

Comments can be submitted at the public open house or online by visiting <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/romo>. Comments also may be sent to the address below:

Superintendent
Rocky Mountain National Park
Estes Park, CO 80517

Public scoping comments will be accepted until
December 8, 2014.

Commenters should be aware that their entire comment – including personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While commenters can ask that their personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the NPS cannot guarantee that this will be possible.

Keep Informed

For updates and information about the process, press releases, newsletters, planning documents, and the EA when completed, please visit our website at:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/romo>